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Parsha Balak
by Julie Zhuk on 2024-07-20

In this week's Parsha, the Jews are camping out on the bank of the Jordan River. This is located opposite the city of the Jericho. The Parsha takes place right after last week's Parsha Chukat when the Jews took over with their leader Moses winning a war against the king Sichon who was part of the Emorite people. The war was also against another king named Bashan and his people Og and other armies. The Jews were fighting with these people trying to win over their land, and in the end they did get it. The Jewish people had asked Sichon for safe passage to go through the land, but Sichon had refused it and that was why there was a war in the first place. Og had attacked the Jewish people, and in the end the Jewish people won the war. G-d was always on their side. In this week's Parsha, the non-Jewish people being the Moabites were fearful of the Jews seeing what had transpired and they appointed Balak who was a Midianite Princes to protect them. Balak was their king and they believed that there would be an attack from Moses and the Jewish people. From this week's Parsha we learn that Moab and Midian were not friendly towards each other, they were constantly fighting with each other. Since they both didn't like the Jewish people, they came together and decided to fight the Jewish people. They stood together saying, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Balak had an idea that Moses had a spiritual power, he knew that military power wouldn't be strong enough against the Jewish people. This was why Balak wanted to use Balaam's services. Balaam was well known for his prophetic services and he had a special ability to curse people as well. Balak knew he couldn't do anything on his own, so he sent out a delegation to recruit Balaam. He was hoping that his curse would enable Moab and to start a war. Ultimately, he wanted to drive the Jewish people far away. Balak decided that finances were not going to be an issue, he told Balaam he would do whatever it would take to hire him and get rid of the Jewish people. From the start of this Parsha it does seem to be a horrible story. It ends up going from Balak who was the king of Moab cursing the Jewish people to actually blessing them! He had conspired with the evil prophet Balaam to send evil messages towards the Jews, but instead sent good messages to them!

In the end, what Balak and Balaam didn't know was that G-d was behind all of this. The curses turned to blessings. Balak stated these messages: "How Goodly are your tenants O Jacob, your dwelling places O Israel." "They are a nation that in the ultimate future will dwell alone for they alone inherit the earth." "The Jewish people arise in the morning like a lion does who is able to raise itself to do the will of G-d fearlessly." The last message that was sent out with the help of G-d in this week's Parsha was, "Those who bless you will be blessed, and those who curse you shall be cursed themselves." By the end of the Parsha, we learn that the Jewish people are waiting for the Moshiach. There were a group of Jews, if not all who grew to worship a certain idol known as Peor. Worshiping Peor meant one was to defecate in front of that god. The Parsha does not talk much about this so I didn't write a lot about this either. There was a high-ranking Jew who took a Midianite Jewish Princess into their tent. This was seen as not a good thing and Pinchas, being a good Jew decided to put a stop to it. He killed them both, because if he had not G-d was going to send a plague that would rage among the Jews.

Haftara Balak

This week's Haftara is in the book of Micah. The reason for it being in the book of Micah is because there was a Prophet named Micah. He was able to predict about the Jewish people going to war with Gog and Magog. This war will happen before the Moshiach comes and before the coming of the Final Redemption. It is in this week's Haftara, we learn of G-d telling the Jews that He will remove any enemies that the Jewish people have. G-d will send something that is remaining from our Forefather Jacob to be around the Jewish people, it will be as if he never did leave the Jews to begin with. Having this around the Jewish people, it will be like dew sent by G-d. It is said in the Haftara, that it will be like torrents of rain coming from the sky upon vegetation. There would be no hope for man that didn't wait for the sons of men. The Prophet Micah described G-d removing anyone with magical powers who would try to bring harm towards the Jews. It is also in this week's Haftara, that the Prophet reprimands the Jewish people for not observing His commandments. G-d calling the "mountains and hills" his witnesses.

This is G-d's way to refer to the Matriarchs and Patriarchs. G-d is trying to remind the Jewish people of the great thing that G-d did for our Matriarchs and Patriarchs. One thing that is mentioned in this week's Haftara is how G-d took the Jewish people out of Egypt. Another important thing mentioned is G-d replaced Balaam's who was the son of Beor. Balaam wanted to send curses to the Jews, but he ended up sending blessings to the Jewish people. At the end of this week's Haftara, the Jewish people express their concern to the Prophet Micha for not knowing how to serve G-d in the right way. The Prophet Micha reminds them of the Torah and its ways. The Prophet Micah says that everything they need to know how to follow G-d and His ways is written down in the Torah. There is a famous quote in this week's Haftara, "He has told you, O Man. What is good and what G-d demand of you. To do justice, love, have kindness, and walk discreetly with G-d."